

# הקשר היהודי שלך

## Your Jewish Connection

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### Jews and Politics – Where Do You Land on the Spectrum?

Politics is a complex subject, particularly as we approach our presidential election in 2016. Add Jews to the equation and it becomes more complex. Jews are active politically, both as Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, and everything in between.

During the US Civil War, Jews were initially [quiet on the subject of slavery](#), but came to support President



Lincoln, the Republican Party, and emancipation of the slaves. Jews have a history of becoming [involved with political movements](#), such as socialist, labor, anti-communist, and Zionist movements. Jews began their foray into politics as conservatives, but as more Jews came to the USA from Europe, American Jewry's political leanings changed to liberal views.

The Public Religion Research Institute published survey results [about Jewish values in 2012](#). The Institute found that, politically, many Jews identified as Democrats. The Pew Research Center conducted 2013 and earlier surveys with Jews. Overall, [the surveys](#) indicated that non-Orthodox Jews are a "... strongly liberal, Democratic group..." (approximately 57%) while Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jews "... consider themselves politically conservative..." (54% and 64% respectively). [For more details about the Pew surveys, [check out the infographic](#).]

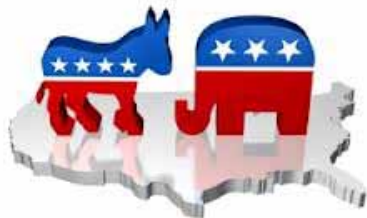
Political scientist Kenneth Wald finds the politics of American Jewry puzzling. In March, 2014, [John Sides of The Washington Post](#) asked Wald about this. Wald responded via email:

*"My account of American Jewish political behavior emphasizes the uniqueness of the American context. The U.S. Constitution follows a classic liberal model in separating citizenship and religion. Rather than rooting citizenship in blood or religion, the American system eliminates ethnic particularity as a condition for full membership in the political community.*

*"This arrangement resonates powerfully with American Jews for practical reasons — it gives them a chance to participate as equals in a way they had not experienced elsewhere — and it differs radically from their historical experience as, at best, a 'tolerated' minority whose status often changed on the whims of rulers."*



At [tabletmag.com](#), Tevi Troy, a religious Jew who worked in the George W. Bush administration, wrote in 2012 about the long history of Jews in American politics. He explored the influence that Jews have had on presidential candidacies in both parties, through advisors, Middle Eastern issues, and fundraising. He noted the substantial Jewish support for Ronald Reagan, and Jewish officials throughout the 20th century in both Democratic and Republican administrations.



[Rabbi Ken Spiro at aish.com](#) states this about Jews and politics: "...Jewish 'drive' is a neutral force that constantly pushes the Jewish people throughout history... This innate drive also explains the continued Jewish affinity for Liberal/Democratic ideology. An ideology that advocates using government as a top-down solution to fix the ills of society, care for the needy and provide basic health and welfare benefits for all citizens, will naturally be very attractive to the Jewish personality."

Rabbi Spiro goes on to make a thought-provoking statement: "If G-d could vote, [His] party affiliation would be 'independent' and [His] political platform would be the Torah." Just imagine having a discussion with G-d about this!